

Hope in Perilous Times, Part 1 - Acts 20:1-3 – May 3rd, 2009

- The Apostle Paul, on this his third missionary journey, is now leaving Ephesus for Jerusalem, by way of Macedonia in Northern Greece.
- I've been looking forward to teaching Acts 20 because it's so rich with practical application for the perilous times in which we live today.
- It's for this reason I've titled this series; "Hope in Perilous Times." Needless to say, we are living in what the Bible calls; "perilous times."
- Because the Bible is alive and active, it really doesn't matter where you're at in God's Word; it speaks to where you're at in this world.

1. Be Encouraged (Verses 1-2)

1 When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, **after encouraging them**, said good-by and set out for Macedonia. 2 He traveled through that area, **speaking many words of encouragement to the people**, and finally arrived in Greece,

v1 Were told that after the uproar came to an end, Paul sent for the disciples, and after he encouraged them, sets out for Macedonia.
v2 The Apostle Paul travels throughout that area and speaks "many words of encouragement to the people," before he arrives in Greece.

- I find it interesting that the Holy Spirit would have Luke include this detail of Paul encouraging them, not once but twice in verses 1-2.
- Why would Luke use valuable parchment to record this? He could have just said; "after the uproar ended, Paul set out for Macedonia."
- I believe the reason is that the Holy Spirit wants us to understand the importance of encouragement. People need to be encouraged!

"See with what affection he bade farewell to the brethren: embracing them as a father does his children."

Charles Spurgeon

- The beloved Apostle Paul had the gift of encouraging, and even writes about this particular gift in his epistle to the church in Rome.

Romans 12:4-8 4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 **if it is encouraging, let him encourage;** if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. NIV

2. Be Patient (Verse 3a)

3a where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria,

v3a We're told that Paul stayed three months in Greece because the Jews had a plot against him, just as he was about to sail for Syria.

- This must have been hard for Paul, because like any man on a mission, you sort of want to, well, just get there on time with no delays.
- God's delays are not God's denials! Sometimes we need to just, "Be still, patiently sit still if you will, and know He is God. (Psalm 46:10)

- What's so interesting about this delay is, during that three month period he penned the letter we know today as the book of Romans.
- Also, Paul wrote about this period of time in his letter to the Corinthian church, and in so doing gives us insight into his state of mind.

- What if I were to tell you that the Apostle Paul suffered severe spiritual depression while he was there during that three month period?

- In his second letter to Corinth he says he was fearful, (7:5), that he had no "peace of mind," (2:13), and listen to what he says in 1:8-11.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that **we despaired even of life**. 9 Indeed, **in our hearts we felt the sentence of death**. But **this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God**, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. NIV

- In the midst of his depression, Paul is actually rejoicing because he knew this had happened that he might rely on God and not himself.

"You can't make yourself happy, but you can make yourself rejoice.Happiness is something within ourselves; rejoicing is in the Lord. ...Do you want to know supreme joy and experience happiness that eludes description? Seek Him as a child."

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones "Spiritual Depression - Its Causes and Its Cure"

3. Be Prudent (Verse 3b)

3b ...**he decided to go back** through Macedonia.

v3b Instead of going to Syria, Paul makes the decision to go back through Macedonia. Here Paul is being prudent, and he is being wise.

- The Apostle Paul's of this world are prone to want to forge ahead and press on. To do so in this case would have been very foolish.
- Let me hasten to say that the beloved Apostle isn't being paranoid, he is being prudent. It's been said; "trust God, but lock your car!"

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it. NIV